

who crossed swords with Luther, travelled
 to Italy, in
 order to seek from the University of Bologna
 authori-
 tative confirmation of his daring argument
 that, interest
 could lawfully be charged in transactions
 between mer-
 chants^ncTless ^ a group of capitalists
 than the great
 house of Fugger thought it worth while to
 finance an
 expedition"undertaken in quest of so
 profitable a truth.¹⁴
 Individualistic/ competitive, swept forward
 by an
 immense expansion of commerce and
 finance, rather
 than of industry, and offering opportunities
 of specula-
 tive gain on a scale unknown before, the new
 economic
 civilization inevitably gave rise to
 passionate con-
 troversy ; and inevitably, since both the
 friends and
 the enemies of the Reformation identified it
 with social
 change, the leaders in the religious struggle
 were the
 protagonists in the debate. In Germany,
 where social
 revolution had been fermenting for half a
 century, it
 seemed at last to have come. The rise in
 prices, an
 enigma which baffled contemporaries till
 Bodin published
 his celebrated tract in 1569," produced a
 storm of
 indignation against monopolists. Since the
 rising led
 by Hans Boheim in 1476, hardly a decade
 had passed
 without a peasants' revolt. Usury, long_a
 grievance
 with craftsman and peasant, had become a
 battle-cry*
 From city after city municipal authorities,
 terrified
 by popular demands for the repression of the

extortioner,
consulted universities and divines as to the
legitimacy
of interest, and universities and divines
gave, as is
their wont, a loud, but confused, response,
Melanchthon
expounded godly doctrine on the subject of
money-
lending and prices.¹⁷ Calvin wrote a famous
letter on
usury and delivered sermons on the same
subject,¹⁷
Bucer sketched a scheme of social
reconstruction for a
Christian prince.¹⁸ Bullinger produced a
classical
exposition of social ethics in the *Decades*
which he
dedicated to Edward VI.¹⁸ Luther preached
and
pamphleteered against extortioners,¹⁰ and
said that
it was time "to put a bit in the mouth
of the holy